

9 August, 2000

Dear Ocean Exploration Panelist:

I am delighted to learn that you have agreed to participate on the Ocean Exploration Panel. As you may know, Dr. Baker has asked me to chair this important undertaking, and I am very much looking forward to working with you in completing our charter.

Our terms of reference, which are appended in full to this letter, state that we must prepare a consensus report to the President through the NOAA Science Advisory Board. Our report must include recommendations and advice on how the nation should explore the oceans for the full range of benefits they provide, with conservation and sustainability as goals. There are 5 key components of our charter, which I would summarize as follows:

- (1) Define objectives and priorities for exploration, including geographic targets;
- (2) Recommend how various organizations (educational, research,, government) can create partnerships to better work together to reach objectives;
- (3) Discuss implications of new technologies for reaching objectives;
- (4) Draft up a procedure for deciding how and when newly explored regions warrant additional protection under the Marine Protected Area Center;
- (5) Draft up a procedure for ensuring that discoveries with commercial potential obtain the necessary additional R&D.

My first impression is that component #1 is something that we all need to do together as a panel. Therefore, I am asking you all to come prepared at our first meeting on August 22, 2000 with your ideas on the objectives, priorities, and top geographic targets. If you want to send me some thoughts ahead of time by email (mcnutt@mbari.org), I will attempt to synthesize them for the group at our first meeting. I would propose that we attempt to deal with the next 4 components of the charter via subcommittee – e.g., subgroups to deal with Partnerships, Technologies, Preserves, and Pre-Commercial Development (or something like that). Please be thinking about to which group you feel you could contribute the most. All panelists will be given the opportunity to provide input and feedback on all aspects of the charter.

Finally, there is the matter of how our panel can receive input from those federal agencies that will presumably be guided by our report without making this an agency report. Our strategy is two fold. On the first day of our meeting, we will receive short reports from all of the federal agencies involved in ocean exploration. These can be used to give us background and some ground truth for our deliberations. Second, we recognize that there are a number of very knowledgeable individuals with expertise pertinent to our charter

that just happen to work at a federal agency. I have invited each agency to send up to 2 individuals as agency advisors to our panel as long as their expertise is relevant to our charter and complements that of the committee. They will not serve as “agency representatives.” But ultimately it will be the responsibility of the panel members to craft the final recommendations and stand behind them.

Please note that our time scale is extremely short. We are to have a report by October 10. So please come to D.C. full of good ideas and be prepared for lots of work in the next 6 weeks. Thanks again for your help!

Sincerely yours,

Marcia McNutt
President and CEO

THE PRESIDENT'S OCEAN EXPLORATION PANEL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

On June 12, 2000, President Clinton directed the Secretary of Commerce to convene a panel of experts to report back to him within 120 days (October 10) with recommendations for a national ocean exploration strategy. Responsibility for carrying out the directive has been delegated through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR).

Panel

A panel of ocean exploration experts and a chair will be selected by the NOAA Science Advisory Board. The panel will consist of individuals with demonstrated expertise as ocean explorers, scientists and educators, and/or established records of accomplishment in industrial applications of ocean resources or representation of broad environmental ocean concerns.

Report

The final product of the panel will be a consensus report to the President through the NOAA Science Advisory Board, in the form of recommendations and advice on moving the nation forward through exploring the oceans for the full array of benefits they provide. The strategy recommended will support national efforts to conserve and ensure the sustainable use of valuable ocean resources. Specifically, the strategy will:

1. Define key objectives and priorities to guide ocean exploration, including the identification of key sites of scientific, historic and cultural importance;
2. Recommend ways of creating new partnerships to draw on the tools and talents of educational, research, private sector, and government organizations, including opportunities for Federal agencies to provide in-kind support for private ocean exploration initiatives;
3. Examine the potential for new technologies - including manned and unmanned vehicles and undersea platforms - to observe and explore the oceans from surface to seafloor and recommend ways to explore the oceans remotely using new observatories and sensors and other innovative uses of technology;

4. Recommend mechanisms to ensure that information about newly explored areas warranting additional protection is referred to the newly established Marine Protected Area Center, and;

5. Recommend mechanisms to ensure that newly discovered organisms or other resources with medicinal or commercial potential are identified for possible research and development.

Meetings

The panel will meet at least twice to gather information and discuss preparation of the report. Participation in the meetings will be limited to Panel Members, guests and/or advisors invited by the Chair, and selected support staff.

Public Input

An opportunity for public input to the panel will be provided through written statements submitted prior to the first meeting of the panel, oral statements at the first meeting and through and review comment prior to completion of the final report.

Federal Agency Input

Interested Federal agencies will be provided an opportunity to present their plans and ideas on ocean exploration to the panel at the first meeting of the panel and through subsequent comment on recommendations.

Staff Support

NOAA will provide administrative and technical support staff to assist the panel in its work.